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To: Derbyshire, SSB

January 10, 1960 - Nice

Dear George:

I'm on my way just now over to Nice. Since the USSR announcement on Lunik, and their subsequent non-cooperation in discussing experimental details, I have a feeling this trip is a waste of SSB money and of my own time, but we have to see.

There are several defects and gaps in my own presentation--some of these I will try to remedy myself, in point of clarity and logical rigor; some you might help me on and this would be much appreciated.

(1) Could high altitude photography give some evidence of planetary life? We should talk to some AF experts on this point--the Atlas pictures of Earth are not very encouraging, but they may not be the last word.

In connection with this,

(2) Have you gotten anywhere trying to get AF information on the infra-red appearance of the earth, especially in the 3-4 u and 7 u bands? I know this may be sensitively close to SAMOS, but it cannot really be any secret and if necessary we should try to get the data as classified, though of course, release would be handier.

It might be worth trying to set up a conference with AF, Davies (JPL), and Westox (or SSB Comm. 11) to go over this problem of high altitude detection. I hope you could steer this to Ames Research Center of NASA at Moffett Field, where I would be happy to attend myself. Now that we have gotten somewhere on decontamination, this may be the next problem to tackle. We would need someone from AF who really knew his business in high resolution aerial photography and its interpretation. (I don't think we should leave fundamental questions like this to Bio-Astronautics Committee alone either.)

(3) I have a feeling we must be missing out on relevant work in DOD relating to detection of exobiota. I know (and just that) someone in Strughold's lab has been "simulating the Martian environment for culture of bacteria. Can you find out what happens here? (I have a small grant now from Rockefeller Foundation (waiting for NASA to settle itself) to start work on a planetary-TV-microscope. It would be silly to waste time and effort duplicating other work elsewhere.)

In this connection, JPL Astronautics Info. Abstracts may be quite helpful (cf. SSB-131). Can you help me get some of the originals, either directly, or giving me instructions where to go? I have in mind especially Nos. 1060, 1135, 1136, 1140 and 1143. I suppose I should write to the author for 1115 (of interest in another connection)--if you know better, let me know.

I wish I could have let you write my Nice paper--I was terribly rushed, what with a trip to Mexico last week among other things! Now that I have written it, do you think we might use this, more or less as is, for the Science in Space? We both did essentially the same thing, going over Westex and it would be easier (for me) to hand over my manuscript verbatim than suggest a fair number of points whose emphasis I would think of changing. I am sorry we did rehash this though--it could have saved several hours (days?) work for at least one of us to have gotten together more closely.

But I haven't had time to read your draft with real care. I will do this, probably on this trip, and let you know further. I will also be sending you a copy of my revised (improved?) manuscript to be submitted for publication in the Nice proceedings. By the way, Bulletin of Atomic Scientists wants the article and Saturday Evening Post something like. I think the time is quite ripe for such actions.

Whether such a conference as I mentioned should be SSB or out of a NASA working group, I don't know. I will be seeing Jastrow at Nice, and Clark Randt at Palo Alto directly I get back--they may have some reactions.

By the way, I have a new private phone in my office which will be answered only if I am available (or my wife when I am out of town). So it will probably save time and billing costs to use it as a point for station calls. The number is Davenport 1-2764 (but don't give this to anyone for publication).

If you succeed in transcribing this letter may I have a carbon copy of the typescript for my files?

Yours cordially,

Joshua Lederberg

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